

Please amend the application filed on even date herewith prior to proceeding with its examination.

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 8, 9, 13-16, and 18-21, as follows:

A1 8. (Amended) Inactivated microorganisms according to claim 1, wherein said microorganism is *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*.

9. (Amended) Food compositions wherein the inactivated microorganisms according to claim 1 are used.

A2 13. (Amended) Use of one or more inactivated microorganisms according to claim 1 in human or animal alimentation.

14. (Amended) Use of the microorganisms according to claim 1 as components of feeding or premixes in zootechnics.

15. (Amended) Use of the microorganisms according to claim 10 for the feeding of fish.

16. (Amended) Process for the preparation of inactivated microorganisms containing one or more soluble and/or solubilizable substances having pharmacological activity and/or nutritional substances having pharmacological activity, according to claim 1 comprising the following steps:

(i) drawing out the endocellular mass of a suitable microorganism by means of hypertonic treatment, separation of the drawn out endocellular mass and recovery of the empty microorganisms;

(ii) optional inactivation of the microorganism obtained in

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Step i) chemically or physically, leaving the external membrane of the microorganism unaltered; and

(iii) intracellular loading of one or more soluble and/or solubilizable substances having pharmacological activity and/or nutritional substances having pharmacological activity, into the inactivated microorganism obtained in Step i) or Step ii), is obtained by means of hypo- and/or iso-tonic treatment.

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18. (Amended) Process according to claim 16 wherein step iii) is followed by treatment of the microorganisms with a fixative or a disinfectant agent.

19. (Amended) Process for the preparation of inactivated microorganisms according to claim 1 which comprises the following steps:

- 1) inactivating the microorganism by thermal treatment, at 60-65°C for 30-120 min;
- 2) resuspending the inactivated cells of the microorganism in an isotonic medium comprising the active principle to be incorporated;
- 3) stirring the suspension for 48-72 hours;
- 4) centrifuging the suspension;
- 5) optional buffering and/or fixation is carried out using formalin and/or glutaraldehyde.

20. (Amended) Process according to claim 16 wherein the hypertonic treatment in step i) is obtained by incubation of a hypertonic solution comprising:

NaCl in concentrations higher than 0.2 M; and
optionally sodium citrate which is between 0.03 to 0.1 M.